

**Keane, Dorothy, 2014**, *An investigation of the Factors that Influence the Engagement and Involvement of Fathers, in the Education of their Children, in DEIS Primary Schools in Cork City.*

## **ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION**

When one reviews the research on parental involvement in education among disadvantaged communities, the emphasis is predominately on the mother. In the Irish context, there is a dearth of research on fathers' involvement in their children's education. This study aims to fill that void and provide a basis for future research. The study was carried out in three DEIS schools in Cork City with a sample of 16 fathers and 44 teachers. Teachers completed a questionnaire while the fathers were interviewed. The findings were then triangulated with the results from semi-structured interviews with three school principals and six other educational practitioners in the area.

The primary aim of this study was to gain an understanding of the participation of fathers in the education of their children and to identify the barriers to this involvement. Secondly, the study sought to explore the effect of an 'Inroads' personal development programme on the capacity of fathers to support their children. A final aim was to investigate how the participation of fathers in the education of their children can be maximised.

This study found that fathers were much more involved in the education of their children than had been anticipated by the educational community. Barriers to their involvement included the feminisation of the learning space, reluctance by fathers to initiate communication with the school and their perceived bias of teachers towards mothers. The study found that the 'Inroads' programme increased the awareness of fathers of the importance of their role in their child's education and gave them greater confidence in their dealings with the school. It unfolded a world of possibility for their children, which they could not have previously envisaged.

The study increased the awareness of teachers of being inclusive of both mothers and fathers in order to harness the potential of both. It recommends a gendered, strength-based approach to fathers.